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ABSTRACT

The Alberta Vocational Centre (AVC) Transitional Vocational (T-V) Program, in Edmonton, began in 1982. The program currently employs six instructors to provide a postsecondary employment-oriented program for mildly mentally disabled adults. The yearlong program is offered in two sessions and has an approximate enrollment of 30 incoming students and 12-18 outgoing students in each session. Students are assessed at the Goodwill Rehabilitation Society and then assigned either to a regular class or a differentiated class incorporating more experiential learning and group instruction. An evaluation of the program was conducted in January-April 1987 by a telephone survey of 1982-1985 graduates of the program. Additional information was obtained and comparisons made from an earlier study. Some of the conclusions drawn were the following: (1) the T-V gender ratios are approximately equal; (2) T-V graduates are younger than the AVC's regular students; (3) T-V graduates of both genders averaged 71 on the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R); (4) T-V graduates were about as likely to be employed as regular AVC graduates (56 to 63 percent); (5) changing jobs is three times more common among T-V graduates than among graduates of other AVC programs; (6) T-V graduates earn less than AVC graduates, and females earn less than males; (7) WAIS-R scores are not related to employability, although age may be related and gender probably is related; (8) T-V graduates work at some time after graduation, males more so than females; (9) most T-V graduates like their jobs (men less than women) and are satisfied with their income (women less than men); (10) most T-V graduates want to work now and/or expect to be working in the future; and (11) male T-V graduates are initially, and remain, more dependent on family for residence and employment than females. (KC)

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SOME OUTCOMES OF AN EMPLOYMENT-ORIENTED POST-SECONDARY TRAINING PROGRAM FOR EDUCABLY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED ADULTS

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Background

The first post-secondary employment-oriented program for mildly mentally disabled adults started in Alberta ten years ago at Lethbridge Community College. Today, Alberta Advanced Education supports ten such programs throughout Alberta serving approximately 150 students per year. In 1984, the Department requested that all programs be called the Transitional/Vocational Programs; at the same time guidelines for admission were refined. Now all prospective students must undergo testing to verify that their intellectual handicap falls within the educable mentally handicapped range, i.e., 60-80 as measured by a standardized I.Q. test (WAIS-R). Students must be motivated to work, and in the opinion of the admissions counsellor should potentially be able to enter the work force after one year of training.

The Alberta Vocational Centre, Edmonton, Transitional Vocational Program began in 1982. Currently six instructors are employed in the program. Two program sessions are offered each year. As each student is entitled to 40 weeks of training, the

program sessions overlap with program commencements in August and January. Each session has an approximate enrollment of 30 incoming students and 12-18 ongoing students. A program session consists of an initial 13 weeks of in-class instruction followed by a first work study of seven weeks. After the first twenty weeks, a student can opt for up to an additional twenty weeks of work study, or may graduate if offered employment. At the conclusion of forty weeks, a student graduates regardless of their employment status, provided their overall grades and work study evaluations are satisfactory.

A prospective AVC Transitional/Vocational program student must attend a five-day assessment at Goodwill Rehabilitation Society. This assessment includes both intellectual and vocational testing. Upon acceptance, a student is assigned to either the regular or differentiated class. Placement is based on scores of reading and arithmetic computation as measured by portions of the Stanford Diagnostic Test. The difference between the two classes lies principally in teaching methodologies: the differentiated program incorporates more experiential learning and group discussion, minimizing the use of printed materials.

Each class has two instructors. The Coordinator teaches functional math to both classes, and the sixth instructor, on a rotational basis, assumes responsibility for work study students during their final twenty weeks. The regular class typically has eighteen students, the differentiated class twelve. Each classroom instructor teaches approximately twenty three hours a week

and assumes full responsibility for between 6 and 9 students during the first seven-week work study.

The curriculum includes Communication Skills, Job Readiness, Generic Job Skills, Independent Living Training, and work experience. The program goals are to enhance employability, increase independence, address deficiencies in self-concept and provide exposure to the world of work through community work experience. The classroom portion is viewed primarily as preparation for work study; consequently, industry standards of dress, attendance and deportment are required during this portion of the program.

During work experience, students are not paid by the employers but in other respects are treated as employees. Instructors visit students two or three times a week during the first work study and at least once a week during the final twenty weeks. Instructors provide guidance and support to students and to a lesser extent do job training. Evaluations are done with the work site supervisors every four weeks.

After graduation, students are referred to the YMCA Employment Program for assistance in obtaining employment, or if they are hired at the work study site the YMCA provides on-the-job follow-up.

Rationale For The Follow-up Study

In response to requests from Alberta Advanced Education for information on program outcomes, the Transitional-Vocational

Program at the Alberta Vocational Centre, Edmonton, developed a student follow-up plan. During the period January to April, 1987, a telephone survey of 1982 to 1985 graduates of AVC Edmonton's Transitional-Vocational program was conducted by program staff. An interview protocol was developed and used to focus the discussion (see Attachment A). The goal of the study was to identify gender-related factors in employment, job satisfaction, and dependence upon family.

In a previous unpublished study by the authors ("An evaluation of the work-study component, Transitional-Vocational Program, Alberta Vocational Centre, Edmonton," 1986) data had been gathered on employment rates, and some interesting characteristics of the most successful graduates had begun to emerge. Specifically, it appeared from this initial study that younger graduates of both genders found employment more easily than older graduates, and that the least successful group of all comprised the older female graduates. Not only had this group of older women (which averaged four years older than the employed male and female graduates) failed to find work, but they used considerably more program resources while enrolled. A conclusion of this study, addressed in the present one, was: "The ... characteristics of successful and unsuccessful students (both graduates and non-graduates) should be studied and compared." The present report includes data from the most recent Transitional-Vocational study (1987) compared where appropriate with the earlier Transitional-Vocational survey (1986). Additional comparisons are also made

with the general AVC population, based on survey information gathered for the fiscal year 1986-87 (April, 1986, to March, 1987).

Findings

Sample Characteristics

Table 1 shows the rate of response by gender for the two Transitional-Vocational surveys, as compared with the total Transitional-Vocational graduate gender breakdown from 1982-1985, and comparable figures for AVC for the fiscal year 1986-87.

Table 1: Response rates

	T-V, 1987		T-V, 1986		AVC, 1986-87		T-V Total, 1982-85	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Females	31	48%	36	56%	3734	62%	50	52%
Males	33	52%	28	44%	2275	38%	47	48%
TOTAL	64	66%	64	73%	6009	100%	97	100%

While the 1987 Transitional-Vocational study drew responses about equally from graduates of both genders, the 1986 survey had yielded somewhat more female participants. In the four years covered by the study, the program had graduated a very equal balance of males and females. This balance was not found in the AVC population as a whole, where the ratio was 60:40 female (a disproportion which has obtained since 1980).

Table 2 shows the distribution of participants in the 1986 study, by class.

Table 2: Respondents' start date

Class	Total Graduates	N	Class %	% of Sample	% of Graduates
1982	12	7	58%	11%	7%
1983	19	16	84%	25%	17%
1984	35	25	71%	40%	26%
1985	31	15	48%	24%	16%
TOTAL	97	63	65%	100%	66%

Sixty-four percent of the respondents came from the 1984 and 1985 classes, with 1984 providing the largest single group. The smallest group of graduates came (not unexpectedly, given the usually high mobility of the students) from the first class (1982). Overall, the response rate was 66% - 63 of 97 possible graduates.

The average age of participating graduates, compared with a sample of 881 graduates of other AVC programs, is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Age Averages

	T-V, 1987 N	T-V, 1987 Avg	AVC, 1987 N	AVC, 1987 Avg
Female	31	24.8	543	29.2
Male	33	24.1	338	30.0
TOTAL	64	24.5	881	29.5

Transitional-Vocational graduates included in the 1987 study averaged four years younger than their counterparts in other AVC programs. Little difference was noted by gender within either group.

Table 3A adds additional age information, showing averages for the four classes of Transitional-Vocational graduates included in the 1987 study.

Table 3A: Average age, by class

Class	N	Average
1982	7	23.7
1983	16	24.7
1984	25	24.5
1985	15	24.7
Total	63	24.5

The average age of Transitional-Vocational graduates has remained remarkably stable, after rising by an average of one year after 1982. (Over that same time period the average for AVC registrants as a whole rose from 25.0 years in 1982, to 27.2 years in 1985.)

Table 4 presents information on Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale - Revised (WAIS-R) results for the graduate sample, by gender.

Table 4: WAIS-R Averages

	N	Avg WAIS-R	S.D.
Females	31	70.5	5.8
Males	31	71.3	4.4
TOTAL	62	70.9	5.1

For the 1987 survey, WAIS-R averages were very similar by gender. An analysis of scores by class indicated a small range, from minimum average of 69.3 (1983) to a maximum of 73.2 (1982). As eligibility for the program is based in part on a score in the range of mild retardation (WAIS-R = 60-80), these figures indicate the Transitional-Vocational program's placement and selection testing procedure has been consistent.

Employment Outcomes

Somewhat more than half (56%) of Transitional Vocational graduates in the most recent study were employed at the time of the survey, as indicated by Table 5.

Table 5: Employment rates, by gender

	T-V, 1987		T-V, 1986		AVC, 1987	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female	13	43%	14	39%	288	62%
Male	23	70%	19	68%	132	65%
TOTAL	36	56%	33	52%	420	63%

This rate of employment is only slightly less (7%) than the AVC general graduate population for 1987, and is a bit (4%) better than the 1986 Transitional-Vocational survey.

Employment rates by gender were markedly different: male Transitional-Vocational graduates were much more likely than females to be employed. In fact, the employment rate for male Transitional-Vocational graduates was better than male graduates from other AVC programs (70% to 63%). Female Transitional-Vocational graduates, though increasing their employment rate from 39% to 43% since 1986, were still 19% lower than female graduates from other programs (62%).

Both male and female Transitional-Vocational graduates reported about the same amount of employment in the previous year: between 8 and 9 months, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Length of employment by gender, T-V Program Graduates

	Average Months Employed in Previous Year
Females	8.0 months
Males	9.0 months
TOTAL Average	8.6 months

Table 7 shows the types of jobs held by Transitional-Vocational graduates in both the 1986 and 1987 studies.

Table 7: Job Types

	T-V, 1987			T-V, 1986		
	#	%	Rank	#	%	Rank
Industrial	11	31%	1	8	24%	1
Food	9	25%	2	6	18%	3
Maintenance	6	17%	3	3	9%	6
Clerical	5	14%	4	2	6%	5
Retail	3	8%	5	6	18%	3
Health	2	6%	6	8	24%	1
TOTAL	36	100%		33	100%	

In the past year, industrial, food, maintenance and clerical areas have increased employment of Transitional-Vocational graduates, while retail and health have declined. This trend may reflect changes in the Alberta economy, which has suffered from falling world oil prices. More information is obviously needed on this question, and will be sought in future studies.

Job stability for Transitional-Vocational and other AVC program graduates is described in Table 8.

Table 8: Number of total jobs

	One Job				Two or More Jobs			
	T-V, 1987		AVC, 1987		T-V, 1987		AVC, 1987	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Females	1	4%	54	77%	22	96%	16	22%
Males	4	14%	21	48%	26	86%	22	52%
TOTAL	5	9%	75	66%	48	91%	38	34%

Graduates of other AVC programs were much more likely to have had only one job in the previous year than Transitional-Vocational graduates were: 66% to 9%. By gender, 14% of males and only 4% of female Transitional-Vocational graduates had held only one job in the previous 12 months, while 77% of females and 48% of males among other AVC program graduates had done so. Clearly, job turnover among Transitional-Vocational graduates was substantially higher than among other AVC graduates.

The benefits of employment for graduates of Transitional-Vocational and other AVC programs, and hours worked, are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Average earnings and hours worked

	Avg earnings monthly		Avg hours worked per week		Avg hourly wage *	
	T-V	AVC	T-V	AVC	T-V	AVC
Parttime						
Females	$472	$ 694	21.5	20.9	$6.29	$9.79
Males	$507	$ 614	18.7	20.8	$7.27	$7.53
Total	$496	$ 667	19.5	20.9	$6.97	$9.02
Fulltime						
Females	$705	$1097	38.7	38.9	$4.54	$7.07
Males	$844	$1039	37.8	43.5	$5.95	$6.09
Total	$787	$1072	38.2	40.9	$5.28	$6.64

* Minimum wage in Alberta is $3.80 per hour (the lowest in Canada). At 160 hours per month, this results in a monthly wage of $608.00, and yearly income of $7,296.00. The poverty line for a single person in Canada is $10,223.00, $787.20 per month, $4.92 per hour.

Only full-time employed male graduates of the Transitional-Vocational program had incomes above the poverty line, based on average monthly earnings ($844); female full-time employed Transitional-Vocational graduates, at $705 per month, were some $82 below the poverty line for a single person. Similiarily, female Transitional-Vocational graduates, at $4.54 per hour, were the only group earning less than the poverty line rate of $4.92 per hour; male Transitional-Vocational graduates averaged $5.95 (full-time) and $7.27 (part-time), both well above the poverty line.

Transitional-Vocational graduates worked comparable hours, in both full- and part-time jobs, to those of graduates of other AVC programs.

Table 11 shows age and WAIS-R information regarding employed and unemployed Transitional-Vocational graduates, information which helps to determine where these variables contribute to employability.

Table 11: Age and WAIS-R information

	Age			WAIS-R		
	N	Avg.	S.D	N	Avg.	S.D
Fulltime						
Females	21	24.9	4.1	21	70.5	6.4
Males	22	23.6	3.0	21	71.0	4.1
Total	43	24.2	3.6	42	70.8	5.3
Parttime						
Females	4	24.8	3.9	6	70.0	3.7
Males	9	24.3	2.3	6	71.5	5.6
Total	13	24.5	2.7	12	71.0	5.0
Not employed						
Females	17	25.5	4.6	17	69.5	5.8
Males	10	24.9	4.9	10	72.2	3.4
Total	27	25.3	4.6	27	70.5	5.1

The only trend appears in average age, where it appears that unemployed Transitional-Vocational graduates of both genders were somewhat older than their part-time and full-time employed counterparts. (There also seems to be a slight tendency in all categories for females to be slightly older than males, showing that the female graduates' higher average age is uniformly distributed over the employment and unemployment categories).

Graduates who were not employed at the time of the study were asked their employment histories, to determine the degree to which their present unemployment might be part of a pattern. Table 12 shows that only a small number of Transitional-Vocational graduates had held no job since leaving AVC.

Table 12: Employment history of currently unemployed graduates

	Employed at Any Time Since Graduation			Not Employed Since Graduation		
	#	%	Avg. Age	#	%	Avg. Age
Females	9	56%	24.1	7	44%	27.9
Males	7	70%	22.4	3	30%	30.7
TOTAL	16	61%	23.4*	10	39%	28.7*

*$p < .002$

Only 10 of 63 graduates (16%) had not been at any time employed since graduation; on average, the group was considerably older (5.3 years) than the group who had been employed at some time. Never-employed males, while constituting a small number of the group (3), were on average 30.7 years of age; the 7 never-employed females were younger, averaging 27.9 years.

Job and pay satisfaction indicators are described in Table 13.

Table 13: Job and pay satisfaction, by gender

	None/Some		Much/Very Much	
	#	%	#	%
Job Satisfaction				
Females	1	8%	12	92%
Males	5	22%	18	78%
TOTAL	6	17%	30	83%
Pay Satisfaction				
Females	5	39%	8	62%
Males	6	26%	17	74%
TOTAL	11	31%	25	69%

Female Transitional-Vocational graduates expressed more satisfaction with their jobs, but less with their pay, than male Transitional-Vocational graduates. Overall, however, a majority of both groups expressed much or very much satisfaction with both pay and position.

Table 14 presents information on three other less direct indicators of employment satisfaction.

Table 14: Other employment-related indicators

	N	% of Total Sample	AVC Sample (N=253)
Had applied for other jobs			
Females	1	8%	N/A
Males	6	26%	N/A
TOTAL	7	19%	N/A
Had taken more training			
Females	9	38%	22%
Males	11	38%	15%
TOTAL	20	38%	20%
Judge AVC training related to job			
Females	13	62%	62%
Males	23	57%	52%
TOTAL	36	58%	59%

Overall, few Transitional-Vocational graduates had applied for other jobs in the previous year, though one-quarter of males had. (This finding lends credence to the view that the large number of Transitional-Vocational graduates who did leave their jobs in the previous year [Table 8] had not done so voluntarily). More than one-third of both genders nad taken further training, a proportion twice as high as among graduates of other AVC programs. And approximately 60% of Transitional-Vocational graduates (nearly identical to the proportion of graduates from other AVC programs) judged that their present job was related to their AVC training. Taken together, these results suggest general satisfaction with

their position and training but willingness to consider the need for further growth among Transitional-Vocational graduates.

Future Plans

When asked what they expected to be doing in a year, Transitional-Vocational graduates replied as described in Table 15.

Table 15: Future plans, by gender

	Working	Unemployed	Study	Other
Females	71%	8%	4%	17%
Males	84%	----	7%	10%
TOTAL	78%	4%	6%	13%

A clear majority (78%) expected to be working. Among those who did not, a small proportion of females projected unemployment. (All of those women who expected to be unemployed were recipients of the Assured Income Supplement for the Handicapped [AISH], a stipend provided by the Province to adults deemed unemployable because of their disability.)

Dependence

One of the outcomes expected of graduates of the Transitional-Vocational program was greater independence. Table 16

shows the residency pattern of graduates at registration and at the time of the survey.

Table 16: Residential status changes

	With Parents	On Own	Supervised Residence
Females			
Registration	60%	33%	7%
Survey	46%	36%	18%
Males			
Registration	88%	12%	0%
Survey	77%	23%	0%
TOTAL			
Registration	74%	23%	3%
Survey	63%	29%	8%

A higher proportion of male Transitional-Vocational graduates resided with their parents, both at registration and at the time of the survey (88% and 77%, respectively), compared with female Transitional-Vocational graduates' rates of 60% and 46%. Males did not use supervised residences at either stage, apparently perfering, if they left home, to live on their own. Females lived on their own and in supervised residences, both before and after completing the Transitional-Vocational program, but in small numbers.

When asked to rate their importance of family to them in their decisions about taking and keeping a job, males indicated much more dependence than females.

Table 17: Importance of family in getting and keeping a job

	None	Some	Much
Getting a job			
Females	62%	15%	23%
Males	27%	14%	59%
TOTAL	40%	14%	46%
Keeping a job			
Females	54%	8%	38%
Males	13%	9%	78%
TOTAL	28%	8%	64%

A majority of females, conversely, reported that family played no part in their choice to take or keep a job.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the data presented.

1. T-V gender ratios are approximately equal (as compared with a 2:1 female to make ratio among AVC population).

2. T-V graduates are younger than the AVC population (24.5 to 28.5 years).

3. T-V graduates of both genders averaged 71 on the WAIS-R

4. T-V graduates were about as likely to be employed as the AVC average (56% to 63%).

5. Changing jobs is 3 times more common among T-V graduates than among graduates of other AVC Programs.

6. T-V graduates earn less: female T-V graduates earn less than male T-V graduates; both earn approximately 20% less than the AVC graduate average.

7. WAIS-R scores are not related to employability; age may be related; gender probably is related.

8. Most T-V graduates work at some time after graduation, males more so than females.

9. Most T-V graduates like their jobs (men less than women), and are satisfied with their income (women less than men).

10. Most T-V graduates want to work now, and/or expect to be working in the future.

11. Male T-V graduates are initially, and remain, more dependent on family for residence and employment than females.

ATTACHMENT A

TRANSITIONAL VOCATIONAL PROGRAM TELEPHONE SURVEY

NAME _____ (Last) _____ (First)

Sex M ___ F ___

ADDRESS _____

D.O.B. _____ (D M Y)

PHONES _____

S.I.N. _____

CONTACT PHONE _____

WAIS-R _____

	day	date	Time	Comments
ATTEMPT #1				
#2				
#3				

Date - Entered A.V.C. _____ (D M Y) Graduated _____

- Terminated A.V.C. _____ (D M Y) Withdrew _____

Residential Status at time of Program entry.

( ) - with parents ( ) - on own ( ) - in supervised residential program

Current Residential Status

( ) - with parents ( ) - on own ( ) - in supervised residential program

( ) - Other _____

Income Status at time of Program Entry

( ) - dependent adult ( ) - independent adult ( ) - AISH

( ) - S.A. ( ) - U.I. ( ) - Other _____

Marital Status - at time of program entry

( ) - single ( ) - married ( ) - commonlaw

( ) - widowed ( ) - divorced

Marital Status - Current

( ) - single ( ) - married ( ) - commonlaw

( ) - widowed ( ) - divorced

Dependent children - at time of program entry

( ) yes ( ) no age(s) _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Dependent children - current

( ) yes ( ) no age(s) _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

ALL GRADUATES

1. Are you employed outside the home now ____ YES ____ NO

2. IF no, have you been employed since you graduated from A.V.C.?

   ____ YES ____ NO

3. How many months have you been employed in the past 12 months? _____

   _____ months.

4. How many jobs have you had in the past 12 months?

   _____ full time

   _____ part-time

   _____ other (specify) _____

5. Have you taken any courses/training since you left A.V.C. ____ YES ____ NO

   5.1 if yes, check course

   ____ Academic Upgrading
   ____ Transitional Vocation Program
   ____ YMCA Employment Support
   ____ YMCA Job Club
   ____ Skills Regid.
   ____ Catholic Social Service Regid.
   ____ Goodwill
   ____ WIRTC
   ____ On-Site
   ____ ARCHE
   ____ Other (specify) _____

   5.2 where _____

6. What do you think you will be doing a year from now?

- employed
- unemployed
- attending a training program
- other _____

CURRENTLY EMPLOYED GRADUATES

How many months in your present job _____

What is your current salary _____

Have you had a raise since starting work at this job? (How many raises? ...)

_____

How many hours per week do you work _____
(if less than 35 ask -

would you like to work full-time _____ YES _____ NO

If yes, at present site_____, elsewhere _____

If no ask why

_____

_____

What is your job title _____

How did you get your current job?

- AVC work study
- YMCA Employment
- Family/friend
- Newspaper ad
- C.E.I.C.
- On site
- Other (specify) _____
_____

Scale: 1 = not to 5 = very much

How satisfied are you with the work you do now? _____

How satisfied are you with your current salary? _____

Is your current job related to your A.V.C. work experience training? _____

Scale: 1 = not to 5 = very much

Please rate how important each of the following was in helping you to get and/or keep your current job _____

GETTING	KEEPING
1) Family _____	1) Family _____
2) Social Worker/Work Counsellor ____	2) Social Worker/Work Counsellor ____
3) Friends _____	3) Friends _____
4) Co-Workers _____	4) Co-Workers _____
5) Boss _____	5) Boss _____
6) Other _____ (specify) _____	6) Other _____ (specify) _____
_____	_____

Please rate how important the following would be in causing you to quit or look for another job

_____ not enough hours
_____ getting more money
_____ health problems
_____ family problems (include child care)
_____ problems with your boss
_____ problems with co-workers
_____ the work is too difficult
_____ boredom
_____ other (Specify) _____

Have you applied for another job since starting your present job?

_____ YES _____ NO

- if yes - why _____

what type of job _____

Rate - How important certain parts of your work is to you

- salary _____
- getting ahead _____
- friendship with co-workers _____
- knowing that you do the job well _____
- making decisions _____
- job security _____
- job variety _____
- pleasing your boss _____
- location _____
- hours of work _____
- other _____ (Specify) _____

UNEMPLOYED GRADUATES

What is the main reason you are unemployed now.

_____ can't find a suitable job
_____ would have to travel too far
_____ my family need me at home
_____ I do volunteer work
_____ medical reasons
_____ I don't need to work
_____ I don't want to work
_____ I was fired
_____ I was laid off
_____ I am taking full-time training
_____ No one will help me find work
_____ Other

What was the last job interview you've gone to? Specify _____

_____

What is your source of income

_____ family
_____ S.A.
_____ AISH
_____ Savings
_____ U.I.
_____ Other

Are you receiving assistance in finding work _____ YES _____ NO

If YES is the assistance satisfactory _____ YES _____ NO

Who is giving you assistance to find work?

_____ family
_____ YMCA
_____ C.E.I.C.
_____ On Site
_____ Friends
_____ Goodwill
_____ Other _____